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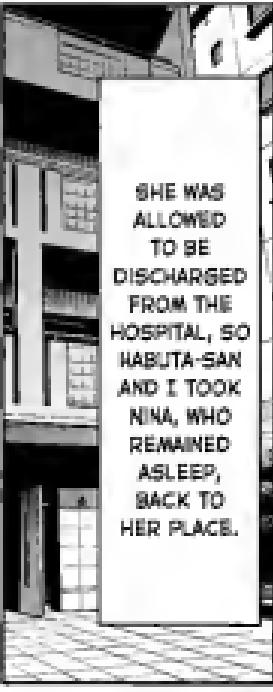
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CHAPTER 22 FORTRESS OF THORNS





SHE WAS ALLOWED TO BE DISCHARGED FROM THE HOSPITAL, SO HABUTA-SAN AND I TOOK NINA, WHO REMAINED ASLEEP, BACK TO HER PLACE.

HER CONDITION WAS THEN CLASSIFIED AS A "PERSISTENT VEGETATIVE STATE".



THERE IS STILL THE MONEY ISSUE.

FROM HERE ON OUT... ARE THINGS REALLY GOING TO BE ALRIGHT?



...IT'LL WORK OUT SOMEHOW.

WE CAN'T TOUCH MOTHER'S INHERITANCE.

SO LONG AS NINA REMAINS AS ME,



THREE MONTHS HAD PASSED SINCE TANZAWA NINA WENT INTO A COMA.



AS LONG AS
I POSSESS
HER FACE...

BASICALLY,
I'M SAYING THAT
AS LONG AS YOU
POSSESS NINA'S
FACE, THE PATH
TO SUCCESS
WILL BE
UNHINDERED.

WITH THE
FAME IN
YOUR HANDS,
MONEY WILL
FLOW IN AS
A MATTER
OF COURSE.

SIMPLY,
WE'RE LOOKING
AWAY OUR
SECRET.



FOR THAT,
IT'S MORE CONVENIENT
TO KEEP NINA HERE
RATHER THAN AT
THE HOSPITAL.

HOWEVER,
WHAT
SHOULD WE DO
IF SOMEONE IS
LOOKING FOR THE
PRINCESS AND
CUTS THROUGH
THE THORNS?

IN OTHER
WORD..
YOU COULD
SAY WE ARE
THE EVIL FAIRIES
WHO ARE HIDING
THE PRINCESS IN
THE FORTRESS
OF THORNS

NINA'S
PARENTS
ARE COMING
TOMORROW.

WHAT'S
YOU
SAVING?

THAT'S
WHAT I
THOUGHT.

AND SO,
I'VE FOUND
SOMETHING
THAT COULD
PROVE
USEFUL...

IN THAT CASE,
THE ONLY THING
YOU CAN DO IS TO
ACT THE ROLE OF
TANZAWA NINA WITH
ALL YOU'VE GOT.

I PIP,
MANY TIMES!
I CAN'T KEEP
DOING THAT
ANYMORE.

IT'S BEEN
SUSPICIOUS...

PIP
YOU NOT
TURN
THEM
DOWN!

SOMETHING
USEFUL!

STILL,
IT COULD
PROVE
QUITE
USEFUL FOR
MATCHING UP
THE STORY
WITH HER
PARENTS

ALTHOUGH
THE
CONTENTS
ARE QUITE
SIMPLE,
LIKE WHAT
SHE PIP
OR ATE.

YES

22.01. Weather: cool
Breakfast: a fresh juice
Something
Lunch: Tomato
Salad

NINA'S
DIARY!

23.01. Weather: nice, sunny
Breakfast: bacon and eggs, bacon

24.01. Weather: cool, cloudy
Breakfast: cereal and milk
Lunch: sandwich



CAN I REALLY
PULL OFF AN
ACT THAT
SURPASSES
THE BOND
BETWEEN
PARENT AND
CHILD...?

WILL THEY
FALL FOR IT
THOUGH?





THAT'S
RIGHT.
FOR US,
THERE IS NO
GREATER
GIFT THAN
THIS.
YOU ARE
OUR PRIDE
AND JOY.

KNOWING
THAT YOU HAVE
OVERCOME THAT
TERRIBLE
ILLNESS AND CAN
NOW GREET US
WITH A SMILE,
THIS ALONE HAS
MADE US
INCREADIBLY
HAPPY.

Papa Mama

I'm sorry

NINA'S FAMILY,
WHO ARE NOT
AWARE THAT
THEY HAVE BEEN
ROBBED OF THEIR
DAUGHTER...

EVEN
THEM,
I HAVE
STOLEN
FROM
HER.

I'LL BE
USING
THE
KITCHEN
TONIGHT
MAMA IS
COOKING
DINNER.





START LINE

**DON'T
OPEN
THAT
DOOR!**





I NEED TO PULL MYSELF TOGETHER.



I HAVE TO PAY MORE ATTENTION TO HOW YOU COOK.

I KNEW IT, MAMA'S COOKING IS THE BEST.

THAT WAS EXHAUSTING...

EVEN MORE SO THAN PLAYING THE MAIN ROLE IN A BIS PLAY...

Click

BE CAREFUL AND DON'T CATCH A COLD!

SEE YA. WE'LL COME AGAIN, TAKE CARE.

GOT IT! YOU GUYS TAKE CARE TOO!



SINCE IT'S NOT POSSIBLE TO TURN HER DOWN EVERY TIME, SHE IS HERE ONCE A MONTH, WITHOUT FAIL.

FOR SOME REASON, BEGAN TO DROP BY FREQUENTLY.

SINCE THIEN, NINA'S MOTHER

IF MY MOTHER WAS STILL ALIVE... WOULD SHE BE STANDING THERE INSTEAD?

YES! I LOVE EVERYTHING YOU MAKE!

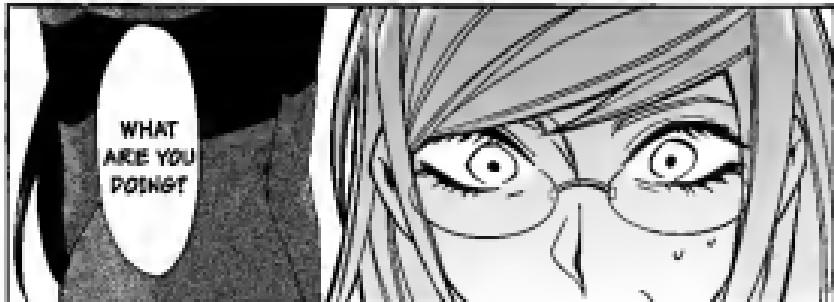
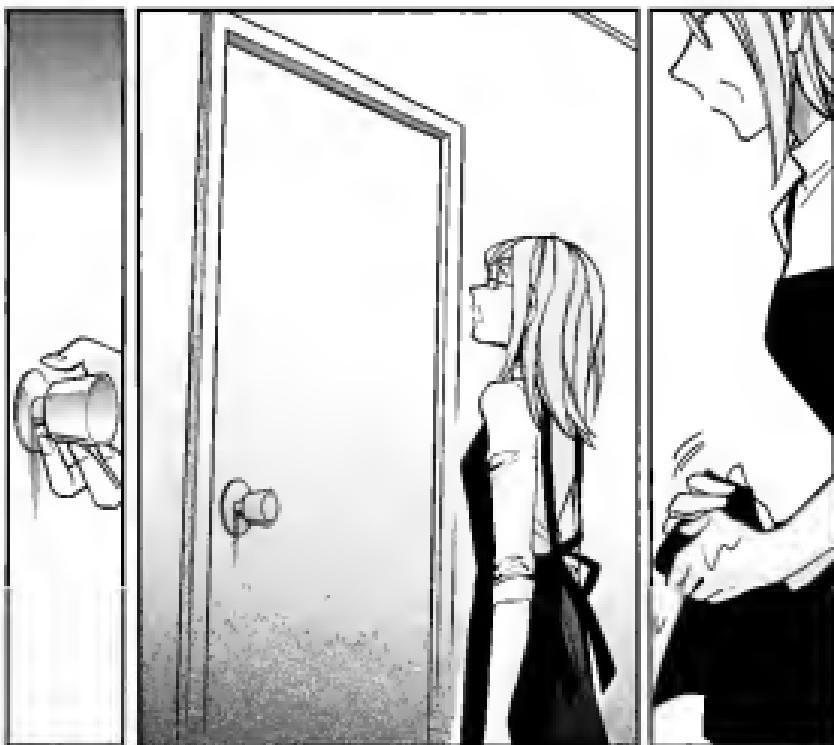
YOU LIKED STEW, RIGHT?

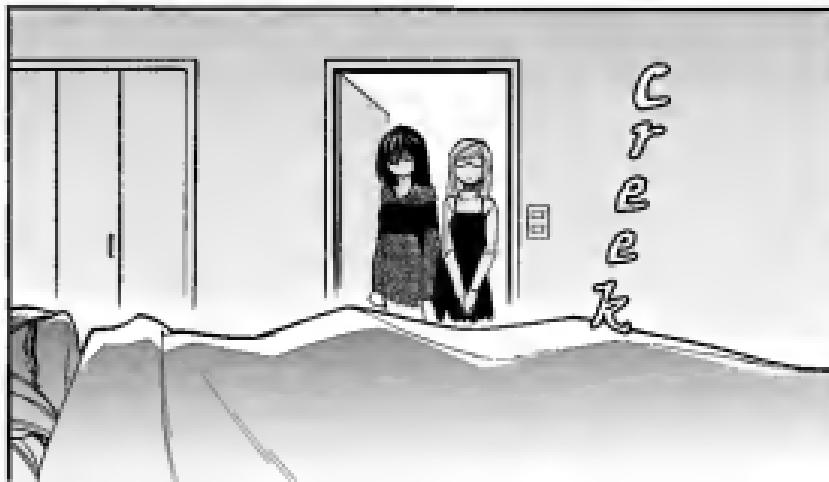
HOWEVER, BECAUSE SHE IS ALWAYS SO KIND

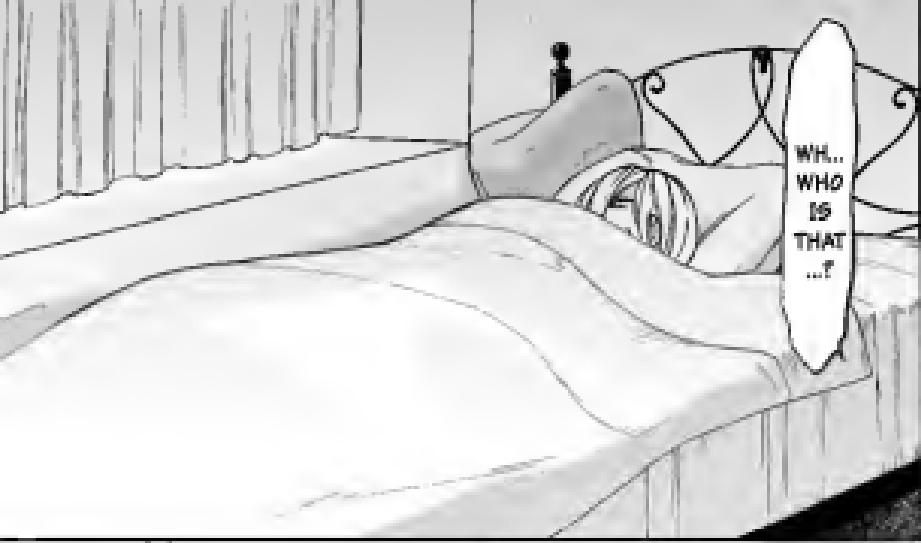
OH... I HAVE TO TAKE THIS CALL.

SURE

I HAVE INADVERTENTLY BECOME SPOILT BY HER KINDNESS.







I COULDN'T
BRING
MYSELF
TO SAY
ANYTHING
BECAUSE
I didn't
want you
to worry.

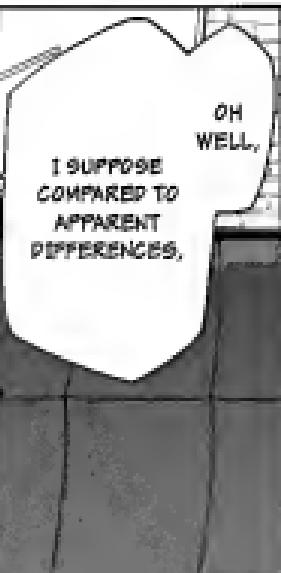
SO
THAT'S
HOW IT
IS...

INDIA

YOU SEE,
TO ME,
SHE WAS
NOT JUST A
MANAGER.
SHE WAS,
AND STILL
IS, MY
FRIEND.

WHAT
MAKES
YOU
THINK
THAT?

HER
MOTHER IS
SUSPICIOUS
OF YOU



ALRIGHT.
IF SHE BECOMES
MORE SUSPICIOUS,
THEN CONTACT ME
IMMEDIATELY.



ONLY THE
MOTHER IS
SUSPICIOUS
OF YOU!

E, THEN...
HAD THE
FEELING
THAT I
WOULD NOT
BE ABLE TO
OPPOSE
FATE.

FROM
HABUTA
KINGO'S
SMILE,
A
DREADFUL
FOREBODING
CREPT UP
WITHIN MY
CHEST.

IN ANY
CASE, YOU
SHOULD
FOCUS ON
'SALOME.'

"SALO-
ME"...

S
a
v
e
r
s

I'll do
some-
thing
about
it.

END OF CHAPTER 22